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What you need to know before making financial gifts

Christine Benz of Morningstar

If you have gifting to loved ones on your mind, here are some considerations related to taxes and logistics.

Gifting logistics

Unless you're writing a check from your bank account, the logistics of gifting funds can get a bit complicated.

If you want to gift from your IRA, your only option is to sell a chunk of it, then pay any taxes due, then write a check. That's not terrible, so long as you understand the tax implications. IRA withdrawals are typically subject to ordinary income tax, along with penalties if you're not yet 59½. You could also trigger some



A board above the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange displays the closing number for the Dow Jones industrial average, Monday, Feb. 2, 2026.

Associated Press

assets can be invested in almost anything. Note that UGMA/UTMA assets may reduce a student's eligibility for financial aid.

3. IRA (if the child has earned income): Funding an IRA can ensure that a young adult fully benefits from compounding for retirement, and the IRA wrapper offers tax benefits. But the young person needs to have earned enough compensation (from work) in a given year to cover the amount of the IRA contribution you're making on their behalf, though the contribution doesn't have to come directly from the young adult's own coffers.

Gift tax: a nonissue for most

If you give \$19,000 or less to any one individual in a single year, there are no reporting or tax requirements. Married couples can give twice that amount with no tax or reporting requirements.

Even if you give more than \$19,000 to an individual in a single year, it's not automatically subject to gift tax. Rather, anyone exceeding the gift-tax threshold in a single year must file the gift tax return form, and that excess amount counts against their lifetime exclusion amount. Only when those excess amounts (combined with the value of the individual's estate) exceed the lifetime exclusion amount currently nearly \$14 million does anyone actually owe taxes on those gifts. So that's not a barrier for most people.

Tax benefits are limited

Because the lifetime gift/estate tax exclusion amount is currently so high, avoiding estate tax shouldn't be a major motivation for most people to gift assets to individuals during their lifetimes at least for now. The estate tax exclusion has been much lower in the past and could go lower again: It was \$2 million as recently as 2008, for example. Moreover, some states levy their own estate taxes, and in most cases, they're lower than the federal threshold. □

knock-on tax effects like the income-related monthly adjustment amount. In other words, gifting from your IRA isn't as seamless as making a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA or naming someone as a beneficiary of your IRA.

Things can also get tricky if you want your financial gift to go toward an investment account for someone else. It's straightforward if you're giving a gift to an adult with an eye toward setting them on an investing path: The recipient will have to set up the account, whether an IRA or a taxable brokerage account, and you can then write a check or transfer funds directly to the financial institution.

If you're giving an investment gift to a child, you have options.

1. 529: Best if you know the money will be for college. It will compound tax-free and skirt taxes upon withdrawal for qualified higher-education expenses. Plus you'll typically get a state tax break on a contribution to your home state's plan.

2. UGMA/UTMA (Uniform Gifts/Transfers to Minors Act): This is an open-ended way to save for minor children. There are no strictures on how the money is ultimately used, and the

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This year's Super Bowl commercials feature AI, weight-loss drugs and celebrities galore

By **MAE ANDERSON**
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As Super Bowl Sunday approaches, the battle off the field for advertisers to win over 120 million-plus viewers will be just as heated as the rivalry between the New England Patriots and Seattle Seahawks.

Dozens of advertisers are pulling out all the stops for Super Bowl 60, airing Sunday on NBC. They're hoping that audiences tuning in will remember their brand names as they stuff their ads with celebrities ranging from Kendall Jenner (Fanatics Sportsbook) to George Clooney (Grubhub), tried-and-true ad icons like the Budweiser Clydesdales, and nostalgia for well-known movie properties such as "Jurassic Park" (Comcast Xfinity).

Each year Super Bowl ads offer a snapshot of the American mood as well as which industries are flush with cash that particular year: from the "Dot-Com Bowl" of 2000 to the "Crypto Bowl" of 2022.

This year's trends include health and telehealth companies advertising weight loss drugs and medical tests, tech companies showing off their latest gadgets and apps and advertisers showcasing AI in their ads.

Villanova University marketing professor Charles Taylor said because of the heavy headlines in the news lately from the immigration enforcement surge in Minnesota to conflicts abroad he expects advertisers to stick to a light and silly tone.

"Because of the Super Bowl's status as a pop culture event with a fun party atmosphere, the vast majority of brands will avoid any dark or divisive tone and instead allow consumers to escape from thinking about these troubled times," he said.

Record-breaking prices

Advertisers flock to the Super Bowl each year because so many people



This undated image provided by Uber Eats shows Bradley Cooper, left, and Matthew McConaughey in a scene from the Uber Eats 2026 Super Bowl NFL football spot.

watch the big game. In 2025, a record 127.7 million U.S. viewers watched the game across television and streaming platforms.

Demand is higher than ever, since live sporting events are one of the few remaining places in the fractured media landscape where advertisers can reach a large audience.

NBC sold out of ad space in September.

Space sold for an average of \$8 million per 30-second unit, but a handful of spots sold for \$10 million-plus, a record, said Peter Lazarus, executive vice president, sports & Olympics, advertising and partnerships for NBCUniversal. He said he was calling February, with the Super Bowl, Olympics and the NBA All-Star Game, "legendary February."

Lazarus said 40% of advertisers bought across all of NBC's major sports properties, and 70% of Super Bowl advertisers bought the Olympics as well.

Celebrities galore

Featuring celebrities is a tried-and-true way advertisers can get goodwill from viewers. This year, Fanatics Sportsbook enlists Kendall Jenner to talk about the "Kardashian Kurse," in

which bad things happen to basketball players she dates.

George Clooney appears in a Grubhub add to promote a deal that the delivery app offers to "Eat the Fees" on orders of \$50 or more.

Several ads feature more than one celebrity or sports star. Michelob Ultra shows Kurt Russell training actor Lewis Pullman, as Olympic snowboarder Chloe Kim and hockey player T.J. Oshie watch on a ski slope.

Xfinity reunites Sam Neill, Laura Dern and Jeff Goldblum in a tongue-in-cheek reimagining of "Jurassic Park" that shows an Xfinity tech bringing power back to the island so nothing goes awry.

And Uber Eats enlists Matthew McConaughey for the second year in a row to convince celebrities this year it is Bradley Cooper and Parker Posey that football is a conspiracy to make people hungry so they order food.

AI takes the stage

For the second year in a row, AI is making waves in Super Bowl ads.

Oakley Meta touts their AI-enabled glasses in two action-packed spots showing Spike Lee, Marshawn Lynch

and others using the glasses to film video and answer questions.

Wix debuted an ad for Wix Harmony that features its web design software that uses AI tools. Wix is also airing an add for Base44, an AI app builder. And OpenAI will advertise during the game with a yet-to-be revealed ad.

Svedka Vodka enlisted Silverside AI, an AI studio, to help create their ad, which features their robot mascot FemBot along with a male counterpart, BroBot. They took that approach because of Svedka's positioning as the "vodka of the future," said Sara Saunders, chief marketing officer at Sazerac, which bought the Svedka brand in 2025.

"We reimagined the robot via AI," Saunders said. "It took us many, many months to rebuild her, to give her functionality, to give her that human spirit that we wanted to show up on behalf of the brand."

Health and telehealth

Health and telehealth providers are everywhere during Super Bowl 60. Two pharma companies are advertising tests: Novartis touts a blood test to screen for prostate cancer with the tagline "Relax your tight

end," featuring football tight ends relaxing. Boehringer Ingelheim's ad stars Octavia Spencer and Sofia Vergara, who encourage people to screen for kidney disease.

Liquid I.V., which makes an electrolyte drink mix, has teased an ad about staying hydrated.

Telehealth firm Ro is using Serena Williams in their ad for GLP-1 weight loss drugs. Novo Nordisk, which makes Wegovy and Ozempic, has teased that it will have a spot as well.

Hims & Hers another company that offers GLP-1 weight loss drugs has an ad that says the company gives people better access to health care that usually only rich people get.

"You could call this the GLP-1 Super Bowl," said Tim Calkins, a clinical professor of marketing at Northwestern University. "Often you don't see a lot from pharmaceutical companies on the Super Bowl, but this year we're going to see quite a few showing up."

Tried-and-true themes

Some advertisers are sticking to the tried and true. Budweiser's heartwarming ad shows a Clydesdale foal growing up with a bald eagle to the tune of Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird." The ad celebrates Budweiser's 150th anniversary.

And Pepsi tries to reignite the Cola wars with their ad showing polar bears Coca-Cola's famous mascots picking Pepsi Zero Sugar over Coke Zero in a blind taste test. The ad ends with the bears being caught on a "kiss cam."

Surprises

While the majority of Super Bowl advertisers release their ad early to try to capitalize on buzz, some hold back until game day to reveal their ad.

Pepsi-owned soft drink Poppi teased that pop star Charli XCX and actress Rachel Sennott will star in their ad.

Ben Affleck is back in an ad for Dunkin' Donuts. □

Backyard vegetable gardens are healthy for people and the planet. Here's how to start yours

By **CALEIGH WELLS**
Associated Press

If you want healthy food, experts say to eat what's local, organic and in-season. Those foods benefit the planet too, because they are less taxing on the soil and they don't travel as far. It doesn't get more local, organic and in-season than a backyard vegetable garden.

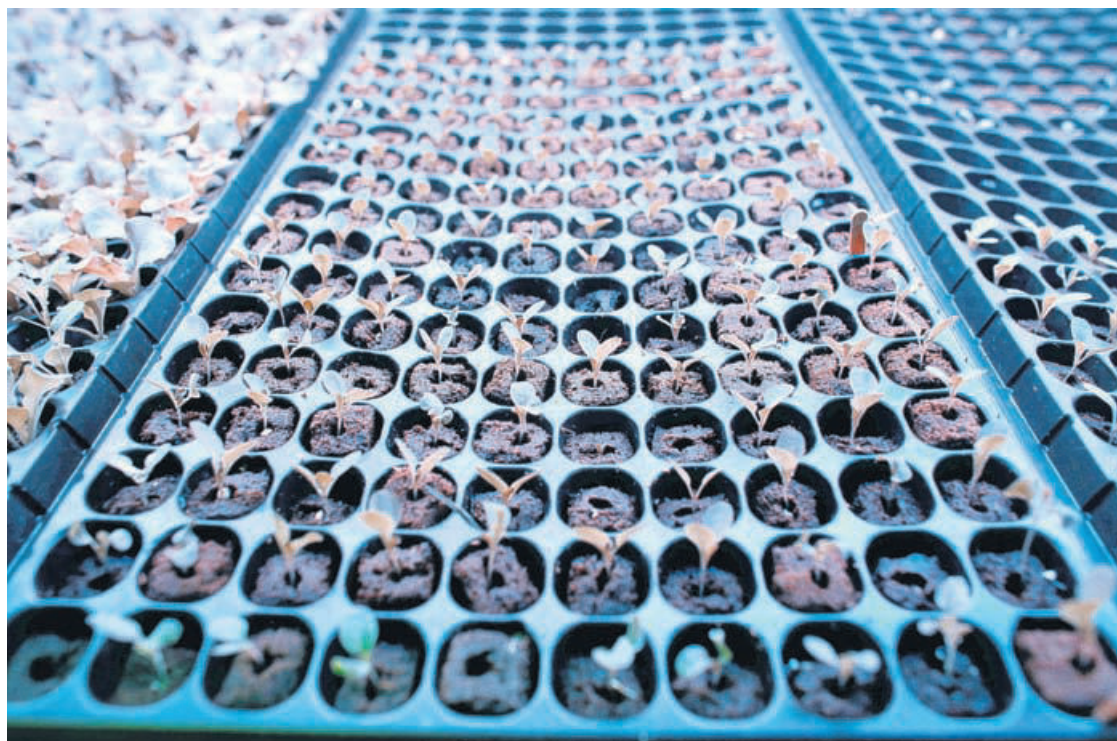
At this time of year, many backyards across the country are still covered in snow. But it's the perfect time to start planning for a garden because you'll want to have supplies ready to start planting just after the last frost date in your area.

Below are some tips on how to plan a backyard garden and reasons why you should do it.

Homegrown vegetables have fewer emissions

Vegetable gardens benefit the surrounding ecosystem by adding diverse plant life, especially where they replace grass or cover a deck or patio. They also can provide flowering plants for pollinators.

The plants capture and store carbon in the soil, promote healthy soil by preventing compaction and can make the air cooler on rooftops and patios, according to Ellen Comeau, who chairs the advisory council for the Cuyahoga County Master Gardener



Lettuce seedlings rest in a container under a blue light in Boston on Dec. 8, 2015.

Associated Press

Volunteers with the Ohio State University Extension program.

Homegrown vegetables and fruits are responsible for fewer emissions than their store-bought counterparts because grocery store produce typically travels long distances on trucks.

"There's this whole idea of a zero-kilometer meal, that I don't have to travel anywhere, except my backyard, to make food. That certainly helps the climate," said Carol Connare, editor of The Old Farmer's Almanac.

Gardening has health benefits

The health benefits from gardening are multifaceted, "social, emotional, nutritional, physical," said Katherine Alaimo, an associate professor of food science and human nutrition at Michigan State University.

Gardening promotes physical health because it requires a lot of movement. The food is typically picked at the height of ripeness and eaten fresh so it tends to have more nutrients than grocery store produce.

Alaimo said most gardeners don't use pesticides and grow their food organically. And of course, when you grow more produce, you

eat more produce.

"That's going to reinforce people eating more fruits and vegetables even in the off season when they're not growing food. So they try new foods, they potentially increase creativity and their cooking skills," she said.

Alaimo said gardening also connects people with nature, provides a sense of responsibility and accomplishment and encourages sharing harvests with friends. All of that can contribute to reduced stress, lower blood pressure and higher energy, she said.

Picking the right spot and

budgeting

Sunlight is the biggest factor in choosing where to put your garden. Most produce wants at least six hours of sunlight per day. If sunny spots are few, save them for fruiting plants because leafy greens can tolerate more shade.

It also helps to have a nearby water source because you'll get more food for less effort if you're not lugging buckets of water a long way.

If you're growing in the ground, Comeau said to start with a soil test to determine its acidity and nutrient makeup. Soil samples, once bagged or boxed, can typically be sent to a cooperative extension office at a university. The Old Farmer's Almanac offers a list of extension offices by state. The results will give you an idea of what to grow and whether you need fertilizer or other amendments.

If you have barren soil or a concrete patio, you can buy or build raised beds with purchased soil. Connare said raised beds have advantages such as controlling the soil, but the disadvantages include the cost and the likelihood of compacting soil and eventually needing to replace it. After finding the right spot, Comeau said the next step is figuring out how much you have to spend. □

Renée Fleming, Béla Fleck to perform together at Carnegie Hall after dropping out of Kennedy Center



Singer Renee Fleming speaks after receiving a Crystal Award at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Jan. 16, 2023.

Associated Press

By **RONALD BLUM**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP)—Renée Fleming and Béla Fleck, who both dropped out of Kennedy Center appearances after President Donald Trump took over the venue, will give a joint concert at Carnegie Hall as part of a 2026-27 season that also will include a Philip Glass symphony he withdrew from the National Symphony Orchestra. The season also will feature the venue's first complete performance of Wagner's Ring Cycle.

Fleming and Fleck will present an evening of Appalachian folk music on Dec. 3, Carnegie announced Thursday. Plans for

the program began in 2025, before they withdrew last month from Kennedy Center appearances.

Fleming and Fleck also are scheduled to perform the program this May 23 at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, and are discussing other possible cities.

Gianandrea Noseda, whose National Symphony appears displaced by Trump abruptly shuttering the Kennedy Center for a two-year reconstruction, will lead the Zurich Opera orchestra in concert performances of the four-opera "Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung)" from March 18-23. □

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Queen Máxima starts training to become a Dutch army reservist

By MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands
(AP) —

The Dutch military has got a new high-profile volunteer as it seeks to boost recruitment to counter growing fears about peace and security in Europe.

Queen Máxima, the 54-year-old Argentinean-born wife of King Willem-Alexander, started training this week to become a reserve member of her adopted homeland's army as the Dutch military seeks to boost enlistment amid geopolitical turmoil and Russia's war in Ukraine on Europe's eastern edge. "Because the security of the Netherlands can no longer be taken for granted, Máxima has decided to become a reservist," the Ministry of Defense said in a statement after she began training on Wednesday.

The Royal House issued a statement saying that the queen, "like many others, wants to make a contribution to that security." Máxima is following her own daughter into the military. Crown Princess Amalia, the heir to the Dutch throne, completed her basic military training last month as a volunteer reservist in the army.

Royals across Europe have a tradition of enlisting. Five years ago, Princess Elisabeth, the heir to the Belgian throne, signed up to do a year in military school in Brussels to help her prepare for her royal duties. Her father, King Philippe, also attended the Royal Military School in central Brussels.

The incoming Dutch coalition government that is expected to be sworn in later this month has unveiled plans to boost the nation's military to 122,000 staff. Ministry of Defense spokesper-



This image provided by the Netherlands Ministry of Defense shows Queen Máxima beginning training as a reservist for the Royal Netherlands Army, Feb. 4, 2026, in Breda, Netherlands.

Associated Press

son Klaas Meijer said Thursday it is currently at 80,000 including military personnel, civilians and reservists like Máxima.

He said enlisting was Máxima's choice, "but we are of course very proud that she is doing this and hope that other people will think, 'hey, this is something I could do.'"

Queen may be deployed when needed

A series of photos taken by a defense ministry photographer as Máxima started training at a military academy in the city of Breda were released Wednesday by the House of Orange. In one, Máxima, her left eye squeezed shut, grips a pistol in both hands as she takes aim. In another, she's hanging onto a rope in front of a rock climbing wall. Another snap shows Máxima, barefoot, wearing green overalls and blacked-out ski goggles jumping into a swimming pool.

The defense ministry says her training will comprise

"all the practical and theoretical military components necessary to become a reservist. These include physical resilience, self-defense, marksmanship, map reading, and military law."

Once the queen has completed her training, she will be given the rank of lieutenant-colonel and will "deploy wherever needed," the Royal House statement said. Reservists are generally deployed for tasks in the Netherlands, but have occasionally also been sent overseas on a voluntary basis, said ministry spokesperson Meijer.

Europe wants to attract more military recruits

The Netherlands is not alone in seeking to beef up its defenses against a backdrop of Russia's war against Ukraine and U.S. reservations about the NATO alliance. The incoming government plans to introduce what it calls a "freedom contribution" for citizens and businesses to help foot

the growing military bill. Lawmakers in European powerhouse Germany have approved a government plan to attract more military recruits as the country tries to boost the ranks of its armed forces in the face of rising concern about the threat posed by Russia. France unveiled a new program in November that is meant to bolster the country's armed forces by training thousands of volunteers aged 18 and 19. The program will start with 3,000 volunteers to be selected next summer and will gradually increase to 10,000 per year by 2030. France has ambitions to reach up to 50,000 volunteers per year by 2035. At a Paris naval conference this week, the Dutch navy chief, Vice Admiral Harold Liebrechts, and counterparts from the U.K. and U.S. spoke of success in boosting recruitment and retention of much-needed personnel in part because of growing concerns about threats to Europe's security.

"Something happened in Europe. We have been struggling with shortages of personnel for a couple of years but now for the first time in years we see that (the) retention rate is pretty OK," Liebrechts said. "Recruitment and influx is also picking up ... People are really willing to join the navy."

He attributed the turnaround in part to the introduction of a program that enables volunteers to join the armed forces for one year, giving them a first taste of service and initial training. Last year, Denmark sought to increase the number of young people in the military by extending compulsory enlistment to women for the first time. Men and women can both still volunteer, and the remaining places will be filled by a gender-neutral draft lottery.

And Dutch neighbor Belgium has just reactivated two military brigades as part of a wider drive to boost defenses.

Moves to recruit new military personnel are sure to put strain on existing defense budgets across Europe although they also will push governments toward a NATO spending hike they approved at a summit last year.

"It's good, it's a difficult path," especially because it requires financing and other resources, Retired Gen. Jean-Paul Paloméros, a former head of the French Air Force, told The Associated Press after France announced its plans. "But nevertheless I think it was needed somewhere to make sure that the young generations understand that freedom and peace are not taken for granted and it doesn't come as a free lunch." □

Rural India powers global AI models

Bengaluru, India

Tending crops by day and then logging on for a night shift of data labelling, 27-year-old Chandmani Kerketta is part of a rising rural Indian workforce helping power an artificial intelligence revolution.

From her home in India's eastern Jharkhand state, Kerketta is part of an AI-driven labour shift that the government hopes will transform lives, including by bringing more women into the workforce.

The work is basic but essential for machine learning: data labelling, annotation and quality checks.

It is the type of information key for driverless cars, for example.

"This job helped me finish my studies, and help at home on our farm," Kerketta said as she tended tomatoes and peas.

Kerketta, from one of India's constitutionally recognised tribal communities, was the first in her family to attend college.

She initially worked as an office assistant at a data-processing firm in Jharkhand's capital Ranchi, where she watched employees working at computers.

But after a computer course at her village school, Kerketta joined an estimated workforce of at least 200,000 annotators in India's villages and small towns a growing fig-



This photograph taken on January 16, 2026 shows AI data labeller Chandmani Kerketta working on her computer in a rented room for her work-from-home setup in Ranchi in India's Jharkhand state.

ure, and roughly half of the world's data-labelling workforce, according to US-based Scry AI.

Rural-based workers can label hundreds of images, videos and documents during eight-hour shifts, either from home or from modest internet-connected centres.

"After my night shift of data work, I sleep a little, and then help in farming," said Kerketta, who now holds a history degree. "In Jharkhand, farming is everything."

Anju Kumari, 25, another rural AI worker in Jharkhand using a national fibre-optic cable network laid by In-

dian Railways, said the job had provided her with a pathway to a wider world. Kumari said work can include painstaking "labelling videos frame-by-frame", giving the example of teaching AI whether a person using an ATM is "likely a burglar, or someone genuinely drawing cash".

Small-town offices

India, which will host an international AI summit next month, has ambitious plans. It is now third in a global AI power ranking, overtaking South Korea and Japan, based on more than 40 indicators from patents to private funding calculated by

Stanford University's Institute for Human-Centered AI. In recent months, US tech giants including Google, Microsoft and Amazon have announced multi-billion-dollar investments to build some of the world's biggest data centres in India.

The country is no stranger to back-end work for global technology firms.

Cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai host major international players, but India's AI push is also expanding into more remote regions.

In Tamil Nadu state, along

a winding rural road, Indu Nadarajan travels to a small-town office where she labels images for autonomous vehicles, such as road markings, headlights and animals.

Nadarajan works for NextWealth, an AI-enabling services firm headquartered in Bengaluru, with offices across small towns, supporting clients from the United States, Europe and Asia.

"Many go to Chennai and Bengaluru to learn about AI," said Nadarajan, who has a master's degree in mathematics.

"But being here in our hometown and learning about AI makes me feel very proud."

'Anybody can be anywhere'

Every AI model relies on vast amounts of labelled data, regardless of its complexity. The more precise the labelling, the better the technology performs.

"When I can design a product for a US company 5,000 miles away, why can't I do it from 200 miles away?" said NextWealth founder Sridhar Mitta, 80, a former chief technology officer at Indian tech giant Wipro.

"Anybody can be anywhere and do the things, because the value goes through the internet."

His scattered employees earn anywhere between \$275 to \$550 a month. □

Empress's crown dropped in Louvre heist to be fully restored: museum



This handout photograph released on February 4, 2026 shows the damaged crown of Empress Eugenie de Montijo after it was dropped during the heist from the Apollo Gallery at the Musee du Louvre on October 19, 2025.

Paris, France

The crown of French Empress Eugenie, which was abandoned by fleeing thieves who staged a brazen robbery at the Louvre last year, is nearly intact and will be fully restored, the museum said Wednesday.

The thieves who robbed the famed Paris museum last October made off with an estimated 88 million euros (\$104 million) in jewels, but dropped the empress's diamond- and emerald-studded crown as they escaped, leaving it crushed and broken.

Investigators have yet to locate the other jewels, but recovered the dropped crown. The Louvre said in a statement the piece had been "badly deformed", but remained "nearly intact" and would be

restored to its original state, "without the need for reconstruction".

The museum said the crown was damaged when the thieves tried to remove it through a narrow hole they had sawed in the glass case where it was displayed.

The Louvre said the crown still had all its pieces, except for one of the eight golden eagles that adorned it.

It retains all 56 of its emeralds and all but 10 of its 1,354 diamonds, the museum said. It said an expert committee led by the museum's president, Laurence des Cars, had been selected to supervise the restoration, which would be carried out by a qualified expert chosen in a competitive selection process. □

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The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and its history

(Oranjestad)—The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins is one of the most visited places by tourists on the island, as it lies along the northern coast line near the mini pool and on the way to the Natural Bridge. Despite its seemingly plain appearance, this ruin represents one of the most important histories of the island: The Aruban Gold Rush.



Built in 1872 by English company Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd, the gold mill at Bushiribana was constructed in the area where most gold was found by locals. The story of gold on

Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when a first exploration for gold on the island was commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year

search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some gold, it was enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young boy found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold. About 25 pounds worth was



found.

At the same time, the Aruban government took immediate actions, and informed Curacao that gold was found. At first, everyone could look for gold, as long as they sold it to the government. However, after some time, the government decided to implement stricter rules and banned local search parties.

Over the years, concession-holding had seen different companies from around the world, all of which used primitive methods to dig and carve out gold from the rocks. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd.

was no different, but used a unique method that involved grinding the rocks and letting the dust be blown away by the strong northeast wind, leaving clumps of gold behind. The next step was melting the gold and letting it attach to quicksilver in order to obtain pure gold. All these processes were done at the Bushiribana Gold Mill.

The gold mill itself had a short life-span: only 10 years in service, but its structure remained relatively solid till this day, and is now a historical remnant. □

Sources: Etnia Nativa

Administration Buildings at Gold-plant





Signature Experience Platter

Don Esteban Gourmet has officially opened its first boutique dining location at Radisson Blu Aruba, offering an elevated yet relaxed Spanish tapas experience rooted in authentic ingredients and artisanal craftsmanship.

Open daily from 12 PM to 8 PM, on Esteban Gourmet offers classic Spanish flavors, premium small plates, artisanal charcuterie, and a curated wine selection. The highlight is the legendary Jamón Ibérico de Bellota, carved live by a master carver, honoring a traditional Spanish art form where technique directly impacts texture, aroma, and flavor. Each slice is prepared by hand and presented with the precision and heritage that define the Don Esteban brand.

Founded by French-Spanish entrepreneur Stephan Camguilhem, Don Esteban Gourmet

Don Esteban Gourmet Opens Boutique Spanish Tapas Concept at Radisson Blu Aruba

An intimate, artisanal dining experience featuring authentic Jamón Ibérico de Bellota



brings the heritage of Don Es-

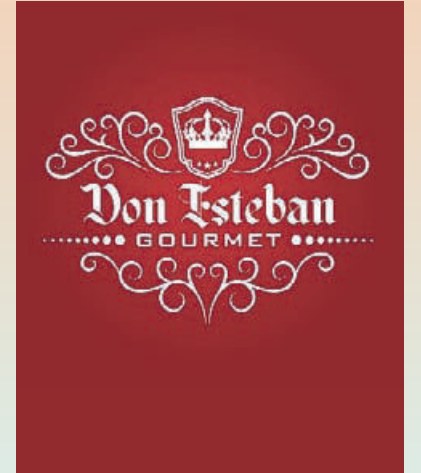


Founder of Don Esteban Gourmet
"Stephan Camguilhem"

teban Foods into an intimate, boutique-style culinary space that prioritizes authenticity and product quality over scale.

Designed with warm tones and a minimalist elegance, the space offers a quiet, inviting atmosphere ideal for afternoon tastings, early evening bites, or a relaxed wine-and-tapas experience for hotel guests and locals alike.

"Jamón Ibérico is not just served, it's performed," said Shareska Gutierrez, Director



of Commercial Strategy at Radisson Blu Aruba. "Watching a master carver at work is part of what makes the experience feel authentic and memorable. Don Esteban Gourmet aligns perfectly with our vision of boutique hospitality, offering something intimate and well-crafted for both our guests and the local community."

Don Esteban Gourmet is located on the Lobby Level of the Clubhouse Building at Radisson Blu Aruba. □

Aruba's Nature is to be Cherished

The national park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the island's past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches during breeding season? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*)



keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches. A very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Bubali Magic

This beautiful close-up image of the pink bird is courtesy of Michiel Overste-

gen of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation. This important foundation showcases and builds awareness of Aruba's birds and other native flora and fauna. You may have seen a 'pink cloud' lately at the Bubali or Spanish Lagoon Wetlands areas? It's most likely to be Roseate Spoonbills (*Ajaia ajaja*) or 'Chucharon Cora' as they are known in Papiamentu. This unusual looking bird forages in shallow muddy water while sweeping its flattened bill from side to side to catch small fish, crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates. The Roseate Spoonbill remains an uncommon

sight as they are vulnerable to degradation of feeding and nesting habitats (Wetlands).

The afore mentioned is just a part of what Aruba's nature has to offer. We cannot stress enough to go, see for yourself. The island has the most beautiful beaches but it is also worthwhile to go beyond this and get an idea of our entire island. Lately there is a discussion going on about the effect certain activities have on our nature, for example the

ATV vehicles cause a lot of dust, noise and leave tire tracks. Animals live in these areas where the vehicles run, often with high speed and with detrimental consequences to flora and fauna. Motorized vehicles are forbidden to drive on the sand dunes in the Northern part of the island and all beaches in Aruba are forbidden for any motorized vehicle. Treasure our island to enjoy it like you do: as a tropical and natural paradise. We truly appreciate it! □



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Visit the natural bridges of Aruba!

(Oranjestad)—After you've visited the Alto Vista Church, the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and the mini natural pool that is located right next to it, you're next up around the northern coast line must be the Natural Bridge. Once the largest natural bridge in the Caribbean, this bridge has been a tourist attraction for many years.

The bridge was formed during thousands of years, cut and crafted by the wild waves that crash into the coral stone walls of the



coast. Before its collapse, this bridge measured 30 meters in length and 7 meters in height, making it the biggest natural bridge in the Caribbean at the time. For many years, this site was also a frequently visited

beach, as the bridge had a small opening through which the water would flow into the tiny beach. Unfortunately in 2005, the bridge collapsed, and the little beach dried up. Despite this, this site remained



a tourist attraction, with many visitors walking along the coral cliffs of the bridge to see the spectacular view of the northern coastline and the Caribbean Sea. Visitors can also still visit the souvenir shop on the left of

the bridge entrance. While the natural bridge no longer is functional, there is now a smaller natural bridge very close. This bridge is often called the "Baby Bridge" or "Daughter Bridge". □

Aruba to me



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Episode 340 – CCCXXXX

Tradition, Transformation, and Cultural Identity



Etnia Nativa explores Aruba's indigenous heritage and the ancestral wisdom passed down by its earliest inhabitants—knowledge of survival, medicinal plants, practical craftsmanship, celestial navigation, and the reading of weather patterns. These traditions, preserved across generations, continue to shape Aruba's cultural identity and affirm the enduring bond between the island, its people and the land.

In this new episode, Etnia Nativa turns its focus to a rich and complex festive cycle that, through demonstrations charged with satire, creates for a few days a universe ruled by scandal, nonsense, and debauchery: CARNIVAL.

During these days, societies around the world turn themselves upside down: what are taken seriously throughout the year become parody, mockery, and exaggeration. Carnival, viewed from a transgressive perspective, functions as a collective judgment of the

year, constructing a living chronicle of social concerns, tensions, and desires. This capacity to reflect societal anxieties, gives Carnival an added symbolic and expressive value.

The term carnival derives from a Latin idiom "carnem levare" or "carnis levare", meaning "farewell to meat" or "the removal of meat," and refers to the Lenten period during which early Christians abstained from eating meat. This interpretation aligns closely with the concept of Carnival, as it reinforces the idea of the celebration preceding Lent—a time when Catholics refrained from worldly excesses, including overindulgence in food.

Another explanation traces the origin of Carnival to medieval Portugal, where the term is believed to have emerged from celebrations marking the arrival of spring in Europe. These festivities featured parades with colorful and decorated naval floats (currus navalis)

and allegorical ship-shaped processions, practices that were also present in ancient Greece and Rome. Consequently, it is suggested that the Latin expression currus navalis may have contributed to the formation of the word carnival.

As a popular expression, Carnival adapts to social change while preserving a strong link between past and present, and between the individual and the community. It ensures the continuity of original local social groups, even as debates emerge between values of use (identity and tradition) and values of change (tourism and commercialization). The greatest threats to traditional Carnival are the accelerated pace of modern change and the homogenizing effects of globalization. Although many celebrations increasingly imitate "world Carnival programs," Carnival consistently reveals two distinct versions: one deeply rooted in ancient customs and religious traditions, and another that is more gro-

tesque, spontaneous, and street-oriented. The informal version, often connected to contemporary trends and Caribbean pop culture, represents a turning point in which conventional social structures are temporarily dismantled and replaced by alternative ones. This process allows each society to reshape Carnival according to its own cultural reality. It is precisely in this space that identity emerges. Each community expresses its uniqueness through its heritage, as Aruba has done—shaped by a distinct way of life that existed both before and beyond the rapid social pressures of imposed change. In Aruba, Carnival stands apart from other traditions such as Dera Gai, as it is a celebration in constant transformation. This dynamic

nature highlights the importance of education in protecting intangible cultural heritage. Intangible heritage serves as a repository of collective memory, forming the foundation upon which social groups are built. While traditions naturally evolve, they continue to be nourished by meaningful ways of life created and preserved by the people who practice them.

Modern Carnival in Aruba has been strongly influenced by English-speaking Caribbean islanders, particularly Trinidad, through elements such as steel bands and calypso rhythms. These influences coexist with older regional religious expressions deeply connected to the Roman Catholic Church, which historically acted as a protector of the native population and shaped many aspects of social behavior through seasonal processions and popular celebrations. The result is a uniquely Aruban Carnival—one that blends African, Caribbean, European, and local Native American elements into a vibrant cultural expression. Ultimately, Carnival in Aruba is more than a festive event. It is a living cultural dialogue between tradition and modernity, resistance and adaptation, memory and reinvention. Through Carnival, Aruba continues to celebrate its identity while navigating the challenges of a changing world. At the same time, Carnival is also a vital commercial season that many people depend upon. □

Step beyond the beaches and resorts to engage with the heart and soul of Aruba's heritage visit Etnia Nativa, by appointment only:

WhatsApp +297 592 2702
etnianativa03@gmail.com

Don't forget to visit Aruba's famous Red Anchor

At the south east coast of the island, standing alone on a windswept and barren land stands a popular Aruba landmark – a large anchor. It overlooks the sea just beyond, watching over the shipping lanes. It stands there in memory and in honor of all seamen who have lost their life at sea.

Where to find the anchor? The anchor is a “must see” landmark when you visit Aruba. It is among the most photographed historical landmarks for the island. You want to make sure you add this stop on your itinerary when you're visiting the south coast of Aruba. The bright red anchor against the backdrop of the deep blue Caribbean Sea and the azure blue skies, make a great backdrop for your vacation pictures.



The anchor is located at the entrance to Gate 6 to the former Lago Colony. It is on the outskirts of Seroe Colorado, on the south east point of the island at the “T” junction to Baby Beach.

Depending on where you are staying on the island, follow the signs that indicate the way to Baby Beach. Once you reach the T-junction, it will be right in front of you.

About the anchor

Size
It will be hard to miss the anchor, it's huge! The anchor that weighs 21,772 kilos is approximately 10 feet 6 inches wide and 15 feet, 6 inches tall.

On the anchor there are some numbers. The 4112 and 4115, which are believed to be the serial numbers that refer to the “fluke” or horizontal and vertical parts of the anchor, respectively. The number 21772K refers to the weight of the anchor in kilos.

This type of anchor was manufactured by Hoesch Dortmund Horde, at a foundry located in Germany.

Where did the anchor come from?

There are a number of stories as to the origins of the anchor, which one do you think it was? (Unfortunately the mystery has never been solved, so your imagination can pick which one you think it might be!)

Story 1:

“According to Mr. Manuel M. Curiel, an ex-Lago Tug Captain, a fully laden VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) was seeking a mooring at the 15-mile anchorage, known as Bara, on the southern part of the island. This is the usual shallow mooring location for ships awaiting orders, etc. The weather was rough with strong current. The normal procedure is that they would walk out three shackles (about 90 feet) until the anchor touches the bottom while the chain must rest on the bottom. Subsequently, they will walk out some extra shackles and when the ship starts to swing or lean on one side, the anchor is properly set. Because of the rough weather, unfortunately they did not get the time to walk out the extra tackles and because of the tension exerted on the winch, it broke, and they lost the

anchor and its chain.”

Story 2:

“Mr. Curiel also said that at one time a small tanker with a Korean crew, while lifting their anchor also lifted another anchor near the inner harbor. When the ship asked for assistance, he went with his tugboat along with a barge, to help. But eventually they had to cut the chain and let the anchor go to the bottom because they could not untangle them.”

How did the anchor become a landmark?

Sometime between 1980 and 1985, three gentlemen (Mr. Wim Martinus – the Harbormaster of Aruba; Mr. August Genser – the ex-Division Superintendent of Lago's Laboratory; and Mr. Willie Davis), were having a conversation with Mr. Charlie Brouns Jr., local businessman. Charlie, who was a visionary and had dreams for developing the San Nicolas area, told these gentlemen that he would like to come up with something innovative for the San Nicolas area to draw tourism to the area.

The “anchor”, which at that time was being stored at the Oranjestad harbor, was

suggested as an option. Charlie liked the idea! He then contacted the President of Lago for permission to acquire the anchor. He was granted permission and the anchor was then relocated to its present location and dedicated “To All Seamen” on the occasion of the closing of the Lago Oil Refinery on March 31, 1985.

Through the years

Through the years the Anchor was slowly weathering from the wind and salt. As time passed, sadly the origin and purpose of the anchor slowly faded away from people's memories.

After Charles Brouns Jr. died on September 15, 2004, his friend Mr. Sam Speziale, requested assistance from the management of Valero Aruba Refinery to help maintain the monument. The Valero Aruba Refinery graciously sandblasted and painted the anchor and poured a concrete pad around it. On April 17, 2005, the anchor monument was rededicated “To All Seamen” in a formal ceremony in memory of Charles Brouns Jr.

Today, the anchor stands both as memorial to all

seaman who have lost their lives at sea, but also as a silent reminder that Seroe Colorado is part of San Nicolas and that San Nicolas is still a vibrant and important part of the island of Aruba.

The best time to visit

When you're planning your visit to the south end of the island, you will want to include in your itinerary the many things to see and do there. The anchor will be just one of these stops, (keep an eye out for our future editions, we publish our recommendations!).

With that being said, I have to say, if you enjoy catching a sunrise, the anchor is one of the best places on the island to catch the sunrise. But in reality, anytime is a good time to visit, depending on your personal schedule. ☐

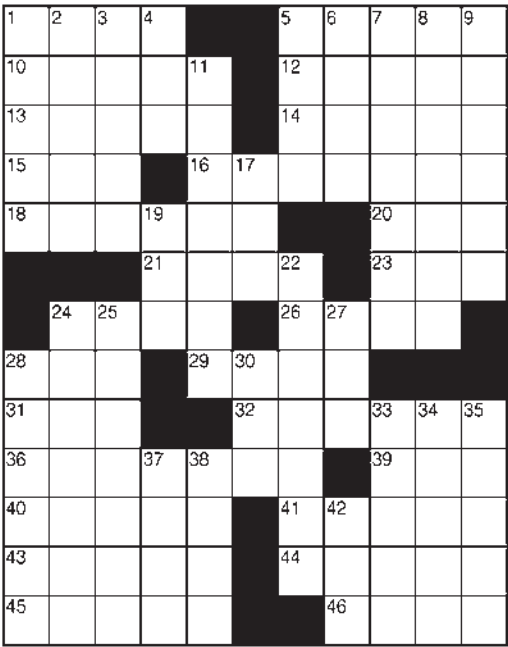
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By THOMAS JOSEPH

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18 Less powerful
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26 Not new
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DOWN
1 Scarecrow fill
2 Treaty goal
3 "West Side Story" role
4 Urgent call
5 Workers' home
6 Open space
7 Fruity brew
8 Added onto
9 Like wedding cakes
11 Bristles at
17 Old hand
19 Family
22 XXII, e.g.
24 Wood coat
25 Outlay
27 Squid's home
28 Rabble
30 Penny prez
33 Reeves of "John Wick"
34 Kick out
35 Assesses
37 Mil. sch.
38 Florida feature
42 Simple card game



A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-16 CRYPTOQUOTE

U L X J K D T S Z D X X D X I R P I E R J K R

K P V V N I O D X P J A P V A N V

E R J K R J I J X J U S N X X J O C D I N

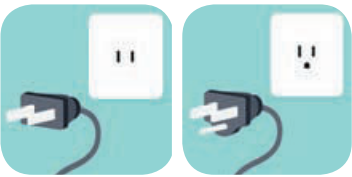
O D X J C D V I. — Y J K I N Z R L F N
Cryptoquote: LET THE WAVES
CARRY YOU WHERE THE LIGHT CAN NOT. —
MOHIT KAUSHIK

Cruise ship Schedule: Feb. 2 - 8 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	02	OCEANIA NAUTICA FREEWINDS - Dept.	07.00 ****	19.00 22.30	C E	1 -
TUE	03	CARNIVAL HORIZON SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00 08.00	22.00 23.00	B C	1 1
WED	04	ROTTERDAM BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS FREEWINDS	08.00 08.00 06.00	17.00 23.00 ****	B C E	1 1 1
THU	05	SILVER SHADOW BRILLIANT LADY NORWEGIAN SKY	13.00 10.00 13.30	**** 22.00 22.30	B C I	1 1 1
FRI	06	SILVER SHADOW - Dept. MARELLA DISCOVERY NORWEGIAN STAR	**** 08.00 11.00	18.00 20.00 20.00	B C I	- 1 1
SAT	07	CARNIVAL LEGEND	09.00	22.00	C	1
SUN	08	CARNIVAL MIRACLE CELEBRITY ASCENT FREEWINDS - Dept.	09.00 09.00 ****	22.00 23.00 22.30	B C E	1 1 -

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku



Difficulty: ★★★★★

2/6

Answer to previous puzzle

7	4	6	1	9	2	5	8	3
5	2	1	3	8	6	9	4	7
8	9	3	5	7	4	1	2	6
4	6	5	9	2	7	8	3	1
9	3	8	4	6	1	7	5	2
1	7	2	8	3	5	6	9	4
6	5	4	2	1	8	3	7	9
3	8	7	6	4	9	2	1	5
2	1	9	7	5	3	4	6	8

Difficulty: ★★★

2/5

Companies can now claim 'no artificial colors' if they add plant-based color to food

By JONEL ALECCIA
AP Health Writer

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is relaxing rules that restrict when food companies can claim their products have no artificial colors.

The agency announced Thursday that food labels may claim to have "no artificial colors" when they are free of petroleum-based dyes, even when they contain dyes derived from natural sources such as plants. In the past, the FDA has allowed companies to make those claims only when products "had no added color whatsoever," the agency said in a statement.

The move is another step toward the Trump administration's aim to phase out synthetic dyes from the nation's food supply.

In a joint statement, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and FDA Commissioner Marty Makary said the move would encourage companies to switch to natural rather than synthetic colors if they can claim their products contain no artificial colors.

"We are taking away that hindrance and making it easier for companies to use these colors in the foods our families eat every day," Makary said in a statement.

Kennedy and Makary have urged U.S. companies to voluntarily remove synthetic dyes from their products and many food makers, such as PepsiCo and Nestle, have complied. In addition, some states have taken steps to ban artificial dyes from school meals.

The move drew praise from Consumer Brands, a trade group for packaged foods, which said "all natural ingredients should continue to follow a rigorous science and risk-based evaluation process."

"This is a positive example of the FDA taking the lead on ingredient safety and transparency," Sarah Gallo, the group's senior vice president, said in a statement.



Applications Scientist Anuj Bag mixes coloring with flour at Sensient Technologies Corp., a color additive manufacturing company, April 2, 2025, in St. Louis.

But the label change could mislead consumers, said Sarah Sorscher, director of regulatory affairs for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, an advocacy group. It would allow a claim of "no artificial colors" for any color additive that is not a petroleum-based certified color, including potentially harmful additives such as titanium dioxide.

Also on Thursday, the FDA said it had approved a new natural dye, beetroot red, and expanded the use of spirulina extract, a color derived from algae that provides a blue hue in foods. The FDA currently allows roughly three dozen natural dyes in food prod-

ucts. The agency banned a controversial dye known as Red No. 3 last year and has proposed banning a rarely-used hue, Orange B. The agency also recently said it would review the six remaining petroleum-based dyes frequently used in the U.S. food supply: Green No. 3, Red No. 40, Yellow No. 5, Yellow No. 6, Blue No. 1 and Blue No. 2.

Health advocates have long called for the removal of artificial dyes from foods, citing inconclusive studies that found they could cause neurobehavioral problems, including hyperactivity and attention issues in some children.

Associated Press

Other health experts have noted that bright synthetic colors are a key component of ultraprocessed foods marketed to children, increasing consumption of added sugar, fat and sodium that can lead to health problems.



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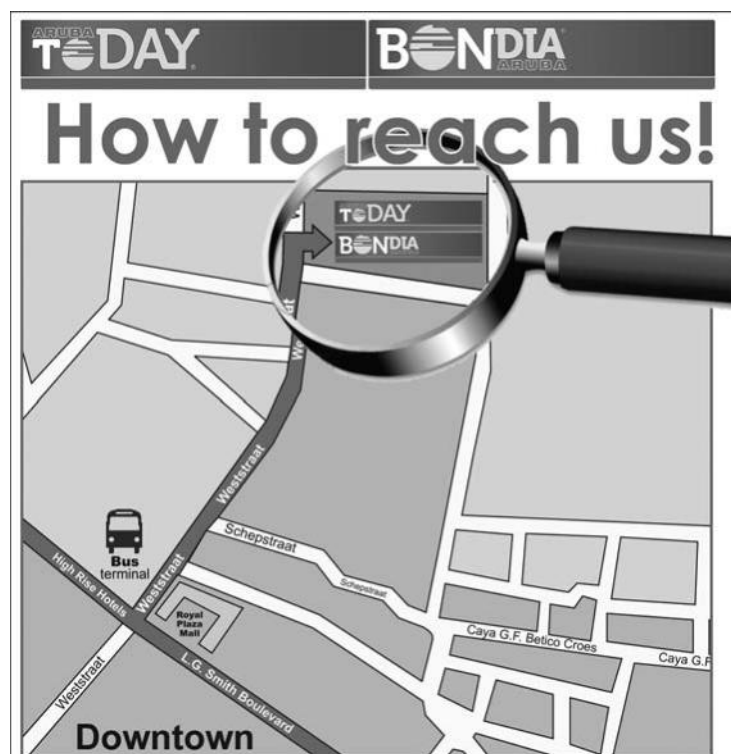
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Is NFL pushing boundaries on international games? Australia trip could test limits of global growth

By **KEN MAGUIRE**
AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — The Los Angeles Rams landed in London just 30 hours before kickoff against the Jacksonville Jaguars in October. That won't fly when they play in Australia next season.

The Melbourne game is part of a multiyear commitment and represents a new frontier for the NFL's aggressive international plan. The league has never staged a regular-season game so far from home, and Commissioner Roger Goodell has already said Asia will follow "shortly thereafter."

Goodell hopes to eventually stage 16 games per season internationally an escalation that could be facilitated if the league moves to an 18-game NFL season. The current maximum number of international games allowed per season is 10 under the collective bargaining agreement with the NFL Players Association.

Ahead of the Super Bowl, the league announced Paris as a new host as well as a return to Madrid and Mexico City for next season. As of Monday, there are a record-high nine international games scheduled for 2026. But not everyone is as enthusiastic as Goodell about the league's global ambitions. There are questions about scheduling, the risks to players as the air miles add up, and the quality of play.

"The voice of the players and what's in their best interests come from our membership, not management," NFLPA media relations director Brandon Parker told The Associated Press. "That's why it's imperative for the union to be a partner in assessing and making decisions on all aspects of the international player experience."

"Any sort of expansion must be balanced against how it impacts players' bodies along with health and safety data."



Kansas City Chiefs fans cheer against the Los Angeles Chargers in an NFL football game, Sept. 5, 2025, in São Paulo, Brazil.

An 18-game schedule likely would include adding a second bye week and reducing the number of pre-season games to two all of which would need to be agreed on between the league and the NFLPA. The current labor deal runs through the 2030 season.

Paris and Rio de Janeiro also in 2026

The NFL has added at least one new host city each season since 2022, when Munich joined the ranks. The following year it was another German city Frankfurt. Brazil's Sao Paulo became a host in 2024, and this season saw debuts for Dublin, Berlin and Madrid as the NFL staged seven regular-season games abroad a record that will be eclipsed next season.

For 2026, three more first-timers Paris, Melbourne and Rio de Janeiro join Munich, Madrid, Mexico City and old stalwart London to bring the international line-up to nine games.

The league said London is currently scheduled to host three games. Tottenham Hotspur Stadium hosts two games each year, apart from the Jacksonville Jaguars' arrangement with Wembley Stadium. The Jags have the option of playing two home game

internationally in 2026 because of their stadium renovation project. The labor agreement's 10-game limit on international games includes an exception for stadium construction and renovations.

The Paris game will feature the New Orleans Saints and will be held at the 80,000-capacity Stade de France.

Goodell had previously confirmed and the league made official Monday a return to Mexico City now that Azteca Stadium has been renovated ahead of the World Cup. The Dallas Cowboys expect to play at Azteca, team owner Jerry Jones said in September.

Calendar concerns

A typical flight from Los Angeles to Melbourne is nearly 16 hours, "which is about as challenging as it gets from a body clock perspective," said Tom Brownlee, associate professor in Applied Sport Sciences at the University of Birmingham.

The Australia game at the 100,000 capacity Melbourne Cricket Ground is expected to be Week 1 and raises the unusual prospect of the NFL starting its season before Labor Day, which falls on Sept. 7. It could be as early as the Wednesday or Thursday before the federal holiday.

"Players still have to adjust several times," Brownlee said. "They prepare in the U.S., then try to function normally in Australia, and then have to readjust again on the way home before their next game. That second adjustment is often overlooked but can be just as difficult."

Brownlee, who formerly worked at Premier League club Liverpool, said game-day effects of long-haul travel can include "slower reaction times, reduced sharpness or feeling heavier than normal."

The NFLPA has also raised concerns about field conditions for international games. Parker, the union spokesman, said players "appreciate the global stage" but expect that "proper travel standards, working conditions, scheduling and protections must be in place to maximize player recovery and performance."

In a statement, the NFL said the health and safety of players "is always a priority no matter where we play." "For international games, the league's football operations team works alongside club operations staff and local support on the ground in markets to ensure every detail is consid-

ered and planned for to optimize the traveling and playing experience for all involved," the league said.

Is it worth it?

The European games are timed to kick off Sundays at 9:30 a.m. Eastern, which is 6:30 a.m. Pacific. The league could eventually sell it as a new broadcast window.

The six international games that were on NFL Network this season averaged 6.2 million viewers (TV and digital), which doesn't include over-the-air stations in the markets of the two teams playing. During the 2025 regular season, the NFL averaged 18.7 million viewers per game.

"I don't see the economic sense of sacrificing US audiences on this scale," said Stefan Szymanski, a University of Michigan professor of sport management.

The sport also can be hard to understand for new audiences, he added.

"By contrast, the NBA has a much better chance of making it internationally," he said.

Teams have mostly bought into the league's plans, though Browns co-owner Jimmy Haslam said in October that if Goodell was sitting in front of him "I'd tell him, I would much rather play at home in Cleveland than travel all the way over to London."

There's no shortage of interest among the international fans and host cities, however. International games typically sell out quickly and game-week events bring mini-Super Bowl vibes to locations where soccer usually dominates the sports landscape.

Asia and Middle East in focus

League officials haven't specified which Asian countries they are exploring as future hosts. Tokyo has staged preseason games. China is one of the eight countries outside the United States where the NFL has an office. □



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Tarik Skubal wins salary arbitration case, will be paid record \$32 million

By **RONALD BLUM**
AP Baseball Writer

Tarik Skubal won his salary arbitration hearing with the Detroit Tigers on Thursday, and the two-time Cy Young Award winner will be paid a record \$32 million this year instead of the team's \$19 million offer.

Jeanne Charles, Walt De Treux and Allen Ponak made the decision one day after listening to arguments.

"This was about Cy squared," Skubal's agent, Scott Boras, said in a reference to Skubal winning the Cy Young in both 2024 and '25. "It's an Einsteinian theory, kind of like mc-squared."

Boras said he introduced Blake Snell's \$36.4 million average salary with the Los Angeles Dodgers as a comparison, allowable because Skubal is within a year of free agent eligibility.

A provision in the collective bargaining agreement states "the arbitration panel shall, except for a player with five or more years of major league service, give particular attention, for comparative salary purposes to the contracts of players with major league service not exceeding one annual service group above the player's annual service group."

Boras said he told the panel there was no limit on raises. "This was a CBA rights case," Boras said. "When you put a platform Cy at the top of five MLS (year's of service) market, when has that happened before? Well, Jack McDowell. He was on top for the five MLS market, ahead of (Barry) Bonds, ahead of

(Ruben) Sierra. I said: 'This is how platform fives get treated.'"

Toronto first baseman Vladimir Guerrero Jr. had held the record for the highest salary in an arbitration case decided by a panel, winning at \$19.9 million in 2024 in a case decided by Charles, De Treux and Scott Buchheit.

Colorado third baseman Nolan Arenado submitted a record request of \$30 million in 2019, then agreed to a \$260 million, eight-year contract without a hearing.

Juan Soto's \$31 million contract with the New York Yankees in 2024 had been the largest one-year deal for an arbitration-eligible player. David Price had held the highest negotiated salary in a one-year contract for an arbitration-eligible pitcher, a \$19.75 million agreement with Detroit in 2015.

A two-time All-Star, Skubal will be eligible for free agency after the World Series. The 29-year-old left-hander is 54-37 with a 3.08 ERA in six major league seasons.

Skubal was 13-6 with an AL-best 2.21 ERA in 31 starts last year, striking out 241 and walking 33 in 195 1/3 innings while earning \$10.5 million. His 0.891 WHIP topped qualified pitchers. After the hearing Wednesday, the Tigers agreed to a \$115 million, three-year contact with left-hander Framer Valdez, a deal pending a successful physical.

Players have won the first three decisions this offseason. Right-hander Kyle Bradish was awarded \$3.55 million instead of the Baltimore Orioles' offer of

\$2,875,000, and catcher Yainer Diaz received \$4.5 million instead of the Houston Astros' \$3 million proposal. □

Detroit Tigers pitcher Tarik Skubal throws during the first inning in Game 5 of baseball's American League Division Series against the Seattle Mariners, Oct. 10, 2025, in Seattle.
Associated Press



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Scamurra scores 2, and U.S. opens women's Olympic hockey tournament with 5-1 win over Czechia

By **JOHN WAWROW**
AP Hockey Writer

MILAN (AP) — Hayley Scamurra scored twice, and the United States opened the Milan Cortina Games women's hockey tournament with a 5-1 win over Czechia on Thursday. Alex Carpenter had a goal and assist, while captain Hilary Knight and Joy Dunne also scored for the Americans, who improved to 8-0 over the Czechs in international play. Aerin Frankel, making her Olympic debut in net, stopped 13 shots.

Laila Edwards had an assist while becoming the first Black female to represent America in hockey at the Olympics.

Barbora Jurickova scored Czechia's lone goal. She



United States' Hilary Knight, right, celebrates with teammates after scoring her sides fourth goal during a preliminary round match of women's ice hockey between United States and Czechia at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy, Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026.

Associated Press

was set up on a breakaway as she exited the penalty box to cut the Americans lead to 3-1 midway through the second period. Klara Peslarova finished with 37

saves in an outing Czechia was out-shot 31-9 through two periods.

The Czechs are making just their second Olympic appearance, and lost to

the Americans in quarterfinal round of the 2022 Beijing Games. They are 0-6 against the U.S. in world championship play, including a 2-1 loss in the semifinals in April.

The day's only other scheduled Group A game between defending Olympic champion Canada and Finland was postponed to Feb. 12. The Finns' roster was down to eight skaters and two goalies, with the remaining 13 players dealing with a stomach virus that hit the team on Tuesday. The Americans were greeted a loud cheer and a "U-S-A!" chant began at puck drop.

Among those on hand in a nearly packed 5,000-plus

seat Rho Ice Hockey Arena, were U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who arrived about 12 minutes in, and departed with just over six minutes remaining. The large delegation that included USA Hockey officials and a security detail, filled a section of seats directly behind the penalty box and immediately opposite the U.S. bench.

Scamurra's two goals are indicative of how deep the Americans are. She's regarded as the team's 13th forward in playing a jack-of-all-trades role. From Buffalo, New York, the 31-year-old doubled her Olympic goal output after scoring once at the 2022 Beijing Winter Games. □

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